

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN

AND

Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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AN HOUR WITH HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

How often the young readers of this little paper must have been delighted with the articles which have been reproduced in its pages from the pen of that venerable man, whose literature, in the form of brief tales and allegories, has won him a warm place in the hearts of all nations! He is loved by everybody, and it is not less true that he loves all God's children, and proves he loves them always.

For many years I have had the honour of the personal friendship of Hans C. Andersen, and more than once been entertained by him in his own home. I think I have seen the dear man for the last time in this world. Our next meeting will be in the spirit land, whither he has so often led the minds of those who read his interesting books. He is really ill, and now only wishes that God may spare him to see the summer flowers and listen once more to the sweet songs of birds, and then bear him away to heaven in the midst of all the beauty of the earth. A curious wish this, that while nature is in her full dress, and not till then, he may be taken home to God, with all the sweet fragrance of the earth accompanying him up to heaven. So it is.

As I have just returned from Copenhagen, and from spending a little time under his roof, his appearance and his conversation are vivid, and I know very well he will forgive me talking and writing about him. He is a fine study. A beautiful old man, sixty-eight years of age, but looks not so old. He is tall and slender, with a lofty forehead and very poetical and dreamy eye. There is something very childlike about him, as if God had made him for the children. Something I cannot describe, that can only be felt. He is

like a magnet whose presence draws out the tenderest feelings, and when he says, "May God the Holy One just spare me here till summer," we are inclined to say, "O spare him here for ever, for it is always summer where the good man is." Never dying nature is to him the annual gospel of God and life; and more than fairy tale of beauty. Some years ago I said to him that it was a pity that the years passed on so swiftly that swept us on from childhood to age, for I loved childhood. "Oh!" said he, "we shall all soon be as children again. I feel quite young, though now an old man."

As he had a letter to write, he asked me to look around his home till he could join me again. So I took a glance at the good man's home. Three rooms of ordinary size on the first floor—his drawing-room, study, and bedroom—all of an ordinary size, and furnished with sweet taste. Here and there pieces of beautiful art, and *souvenirs* from every country and many courts. There is the beautiful face of Jenny Lind looking upon you, and close by the good-humoured look of Pio Nono, who is his friend, as well as several other reigning monarchs. Pictures of poets, philosophers, divines, sculptors, and Dickens, all dear and good friends of this delightful story-teller. Perhaps no living writer at the present day has more friends, without a foe too, than Hans Andersen.

You may not have read the story of his wonderful life, his autobiography. You must get the book and read it. It is God in the history of a poor fatherless unfriended child. So he came to Copenhagen fifty-five years ago, without a friend, with no money, and ill clad, thirteen years of age—a queer-looking lad that other lads laughed at. He went and knelt down in a large building and said the Lord's prayer, adding one of his own that God might regard him and make him a great and useful

man, no matter what he might suffer. And God has answered this poor orphan's prayer, for he has been, and is now, a useful and a great man—such greatness as that which many a noble and prince might well envy.

He is a deeply religious-minded man. He is a UNIVERSALIST, and only thinks of God as the loving Father of all the human race. He has a heart that in some measure reflects the divine goodness; the finite type of an infinite compassion and mercy carried far beyond the tenderness of human hearts.

On my recent visit I handed him a simple little Christmas card, given to me to present to him by a beautiful little girl in London, who heard me say I would see him soon. A smile illumined his whole face as he looked at it, and he sat down and wrote the following words, and begged me to hand them to the child:—"In the navy of England, a red thread goes through all parts, small and large, of the tackle, which tells that the whole belongs to the Crown. Through all parts, small and large, of human life, goes another red thread, telling us all that we all belong to God."

UNIVERSAL RESTORATION.

FROM end to end of things we may not see,
Nor square the circle of eternity;
But I cannot believe in endless hell
And Heaven side by side. How could I dwell
Among the saved, for thinking of the lost?
With such a lot, the blest would suffer most.
Sitting at feast all in a golden home,
That towered over dungeon-grates of doom,
My heart would ache for all the lost that go
To wait and weep in everlasting woe;
Through all the music, I must hear the moan,
Too sharp for all the harps of Heaven to drown.

I think Heaven will not shut for evermore
Without a knocker left upon the door,
Lest some belated wanderer should come,
Heart-broken, asking just to die at home,
So that the Father will at last forgive,
And looking at his face that soul shall live.
I think there will be watchmen through the night,
Lest any, afar off, turn them to the light;
That He who loved us into life, must be
A Father infinitely fatherly.
And, groping for Him, these shall find their way
From outer dark, through twilight, into day.
Dear God, it seems to me, that love must be
The missionary of eternity!
Must still find work, in worlds beyond the grave,
So long as there's a single soul to save;
Must from the highest Heaven, yearn to tell
Thy message—be the Christ to some dark hell;
That all divergent lines at length will meet

To make the clasping round of love complete;
The rift 'twixt sense and spirit will be healed,
Ere the Redeemer's work be crowned and sealed,
Evil shall die, like dung about the root
Of good, or climb converted in fruit;
The discords cease, and all their strife shall be
Resolved in one vast, peaceful harmony.

GERALD MASSEY.

LET DOWN YOUR NETS.

BY G. B. R. CLARKE.

THE night was cold and dark and chill;
No moonlight fell upon the sea;
The mists lay low upon the hill
Which looked on holy Galilee.
The dawn crept up, half-veiled and grey,
But he, the Master, was away.

He came not, spake not, as of old,
In those past days of hope and trust;
The world's hard cares their souls enfold,
And labour they who labour must.
How low earth's vulgar level lies
For praying hands and weeping eyes!

They swept the sea; the nets went down;
The nets came up in thankless toil,
And many hearts desponding own
The bootless work of earth's dull soil;
And yet the Master tarried still,
And daylight dawned upon the hill.

Its sombre light upon the shore
Revealed a solitary man;
He looked their slackened labour o'er;
His eye their failure seemed to scan;
Then—"Have ye aught for food?" he cried.
"Ah, no," half angered, they replied.

At times, in open glare of day,
A quick thought passes through the heart,
And ere we grasp it, fades away,
Not all forgotten, lost in part;
And sighs the soul, "How weak the eye
When forms of heaven are passing by."

So stirred their souls when on the mind
The old familiar accents broke;
"Let down your nets and ye shall find,"
The solitary stranger spoke.
Unknown he spoke—a stranger still,
And sunlight kindled on the hill.

To these poor toiling fishermen
Unsought, unasked, he swiftly came;
When sank their broken spirits, then
With might he showed his glorious name;
Did plenty to their need afford,
Their eyes were opened—"Tis the Lord."

Desponding spirits, sink not now,
Though barren seems the thankless task,
Though empty nets and toilsome brow
Be all the wage you here dare ask.
Unseen, unknown, yet surely nigh
Watches your toil the Master's eye.

As some poor solitary man
He stands, it may be, on the shore,
And when you think "We nothing can,"
He asks your labour—nothing more.
"Let down your net," ah, spirit vexed—
The wondrous draught may be your next

THE ICELANDER'S REVERENCE OF THE DEITY.

THERE is probably no part of our globe, certainly no part now occupied by civilised man, where the natural phenomena, presented continually to the eye, are better calculated to lead the mind to God, and create an abiding feeling of his power and presence, than Iceland. This place of wonders seems to stand nearer the verge of eternity than any other. It is true—a consoling truth—that from all parts of this world the way to heaven is equally direct and short; yet it would almost seem as if, morally considered, this formed an exception. The musings to which Icelandic scenery naturally give birth appear closely allied to those large conceptions of the divine majesty which usually fill the mind of a dying man. The transition from time to eternity, the exchange of the littleness of earthly things for the overwhelming sublimities of the state which awaits us after death, every one feels must be very great. Do not many fear that it will be so great as to give a rude and painful shock to their utmost spirits, so frail and unprepared? But habituated to divine and heavenly converse, it is equally apparent that the mind is thereby fitted to experience the transition with more calmness and self-possession, supposing, as is usually the case, that this contemplation of the Godhead and his attributes has led the soul in the appointed way, to seek his “peace.” Such a habit of mind, the features of the country we now speak of are eminently calculated to originate and foster. Combined with and aiding a spiritual religion, they have contributed to make their predominant character one of “unsuspecting frankness, pious contentment combined with a strength of intellect and acuteness of mind seldom to be met with in other parts of the world.” They are cheerful without levity or folly; conscientious without gloom and moroseness; just what we could expect of a people surrounded by such influences and who have yielded themselves to their plastic power.

Dr. Henderson says, in his journal of his residence in Iceland, that on a certain occasion he set out upon a journey, “accompanied by the clergyman, his son, and one of his servants, who accompanied us,” says he, “a few miles on our way. Immediately on setting out we all took off our hats for the space of five minutes, and implored the Divine mercy and protection. This laudable and impressive custom is

universally practised in such parts of Iceland as remain uncontaminated by the example of those foreigners who live without God in the world. Before crossing, and after crossing a river, the genuine Icelanders also move his hat in token of the sense he entertains of his dependence on the Supreme Being; and the fishermen, when they put to sea, after they have rowed the boat into quiet water, at a short distance from the shore, take off their hats and send up a prayer, committing themselves to the protection of God, and soliciting his blessing on their labour.”

THE POOR MAN'S SABBATH-DAY.

BY GERALD MASSEY.

THE merry birds are singing,
And from the fragrant sod
The spirits of a thousand flowers
Go sweetly up to God;
While in His holy temple
We meet to praise and pray,
With cheerful voice and grateful lay,
This summer Sabbath-day!

We thank, Thee, Lord, for one day
To look Heaven in the face!
The poor have only Sunday—
The sweeter is the grace.
'Tis then they make the music
That sings their week away;
Oh, there's a sweetness infinite
In the poor man's Sabbath-day!

'Tis as a burst of sunshine,
A tender fall of rain,
That sets the barest life abloom,
Make old hearts young again.
The dry and rusty roadside
With smiling flowers is gay,
'Tis open heaven one day in seven,
The poor man's Sabbath-day!

'Tis here the weary pilgrim
Doth reach his home of ease!
That blessed house called “Beautiful,”
And that soft chamber “Peace.”
The River of Life runs through his dream,
And the leaves of heaven are at play!
He sees the golden city gleam,
This shining Sabbath-day!

Take heart, ye faint and fearful,
Your cross with courage bear;
So many a face now tearful
Shall shine in glory there;
Where all the sorrow is banished,
The tears are wiped away,
And all eternity shall be
An endless Sabbath-day!

Ah! there are empty places
Since last we mingled here;
There will be missing faces
When we meet another year!
But heart to heart, before we part,
Now all together pray,
That we may meet in heaven to spend
The eternal Sabbath-day!

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

UNCATHOLIC.—A Roman Catholic priest in the witness-box at Galway stated that after the burial of a Protestant's child he went through the ceremony of purifying the defiled ground. What a hard-hearted old bachelor!

NEED OF CONVERSION.—A vagabond beggar Jew applied for alms to Dr. Raphael, the well-known Jewish rabbi, and threatened to turn Christian if the doctor would not help him; the doctor said to him: "Very well, go; become a good Christian, and I will be satisfied; for you have been a very bad Jew."

BROUGHAM ON PRIESTLEY.—His temper was so mild and his manners so gentle as to disarm his most prejudiced adversaries whenever they came into his society. Many instances of this are given in his correspondence, of which one may be cited. He happened to visit a friend whose wife received him in her husband's absence, but feared to name him before a Calvinistic divine present. By accident his name was mentioned, and the lady then introduced him. But he of the Geneva school drew back, saying "Dr. Joseph Priestley?" and then added in the American tongue "I cannot be cordial." Whereupon the doctor, with his usual placid demeanour, said that he and the lady might be allowed to converse until their host should return. By degrees the conversation became general; the *repudiator* was won over by curiosity first, then by gratification; he remained till a late hour hanging upon Priestley's lips; he took his departure at length, and told the host as he quitted the house, that never had he passed so delightful an evening, though he admitted that he had begun it "by behaving like a fool and a brute."—*Works of Henry Lord Brougham.*

WHAT IS ORTHODOXY?—About half a century ago the above query was defined thus at Gilmerston College, by a Loanhead weaver, who completely and briefly gave his definition of it to his friend, the Gilmerton carter, when he asked him: "I say, Davie, man,—you that kens a' thing—the minister was telling us at the kirk yesterday about orthodoxy and heterodoxy; what dae ye ca' they doxies, man?" "Weel, I'll soon tell ye that, Jock, my man. When your doxy and my doxy 'gree, ye observe, weel, that's orthodoxy; but when your doxy and my doxy differ, that's heterodoxy." No definition could be more complete in showing what every bigot churchman's claim is to the Greek word orthodoxy, which signifies a *right opinion*. There are those who sit in conclave, say at the head of the Mound, asserting themselves to be orthodox, while those at the Castle Hill Assembly Hall do the same; as do also the good folks at Queen Street Hall still more strongly. Yet, strange to say, none of these sections of our Covenanting Presbyterians hold fast by the orthodox Liturgy of John Knox. Even now we read in to-day's *Courant* that "pulpit robes are at a discount in Skye!" these vestments being considered still heterodox by those who ignore, or have yet to learn, the decency and order taught by the great Geneva reformer in his gown three hundred years ago. Surely it is good to see that sectarian Scotchmen begin to feel that the "beauty of holiness" is orthodox, while slovenly, parsimonious worship is heterodox. We may learn from the fact that

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their turn, and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

—J. K. Sawney, in *Scotch paper*,

A CHILD'S THOUGHT.—"Now I suppose I shall have to be very good, grandma, because we have got this baby; for mother won't want her to be naughty, and she will be if I am." So said a little fellow, looking earnestly up into his grandma's face. It is well for all young folks to remember that they cannot be good or naughty for themselves alone, they will influence somebody or other to be like them.

SHORT SPEECHES.—One morning a woman was shown into Dr. Abernethy's room; before he could speak, she bared her arm, saying, "Burn." "A poultice," said the doctor. Next day she called again, showed her arm and said, "Better." "Continue the poultice." Some days elapsed before Abernethy saw her again, then she said: "Well, your fee?" "Nothing," quoth the great medico; "you are the most sensible woman I ever saw."

NO SETTLEMENT.—"I have come," said a Scotch farmer to a neighbour laird who was just dying, "I have come to settle about that bit of land." "Settle't!" cried the old wrangler; "how will you settle't? Your father couldna settle't, and your grandfather couldna settle't and the 'fifteen' couldna settle't, and how will you settle't?" "Oh," said the rival claimant, "I'll let you have it altogether." "But I'll no tak' it," cried the stout old litigant, and turned his face resolutely to the wall.

THE HIGHEST HEROISM.—The highest heroism, is it not that which is free from the approbation of our fellow-men; even from the approbation of the best and wisest? The heroism which is known only to our Father who seeth the secret, the god-like deeds done in the lonely chamber? the god-like lives lived in obscurity? A heroism rare among us men, who live perforce in the glare and noise of the outer world; more common among women—women of whom the world never hears, who, if the world discovered them, would only draw the veil more closely over their faces and their hearts, and entreat to be left alone with God.—*Kingsley.*

THE BOAST OF BRAINS.—Dr. E. S. Sears, in the *Religious Magazine*, says of the late meeting of the Free Religionists in New York, after having read carefully through the report of it: "Almost all the time and space are taken up in criticisms and denials of what other people believe, and in asserting the rights of free thought. So far as anything positive is asserted, we find nothing but platitudes, while the doctrines of the Divine Personality, and a human personal immortality, though not denied, are exceedingly blurred. If the Free Religionists, as some of them claim, have the *largest share of brains*, we wish they would use them in giving out ideas. The right of free thought being achieved and conceded, why not go on and exercise it in thinking out something!"

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